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ABSTRACT

Papers on school and children's libraries which were presented at the 1982 International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) conference include: (1) "Learning to Learn in the Street," a description by B. Lang (France) of "street libraries" and other institutions designed to introduce economically disadvantaged children to books and other sources of knowledge; (2) a report on recent activities of IFLA's Children's Libraries Section; (3) "Library Services for the Disadvantaged Children in the United States of America," an overview of these services by Nita Vegamora Norman (United States) based on a 1982 survey of 652 randomly selected public libraries and information published in library literature from 1975 on; (4) "The Centralized Automation of National Centres to Networking in School Libraries," a discussion by D. Reumer (Netherlands) of the benefits and services of national institutions which provide central services to school libraries such as publication acquisition, storage, retrieval, processing, and loan; (5) "Orientation and Extension of a Programme of Mini-Libraries in Venezuela," a description by Bruno Renaud (Venezuela) of Venezuelan cultural aims and the development of the fledgling mini-library program which provides library services for Venezuelan children and adults; and (6) "School Libraries and Networking in North America: Principles and Problems of Participation," an overview by Donald C. Adcock (United States) of factors which inhibit school participation in networks. (ESR)

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PAPERS

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LEARNING TO LEARN IN THE STREET

by Mme B. LANG, International Art Movement
ATD Fourth World

Meeting
i28

International Movement
ATD FOURTH-WORLD
"Savoir dans la rue"
107 avenue du Général Leclerc
95480 Pierrelaye - France

August 1982

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* The monography of Claudia could be written thanks to the work of a permanent from Switzerland who has been using books with very poor children for years within the International Movement ATD Fourth-World.

Speaking in French of Miss Bernadette Lang, responsible for the "Learning to Learn in the street" section in the International Movement ATD Fourth-World.

International Movement
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"Savoir dans la rue"
107 avenue du Général Leclerc
95480 Pierrelaye - France

Pierrelaye, August 1982

English translation of the text of Bernadette LANG.

I CLAUDIA

Claudia grabs the keys from my hands :
"Today, I want to open the library !"

Claudia wants to paint. Yellow, red, green, brown : the colors are mixed ans slide on to the paper. Finally, with broad, sweeping brushstrokes, Claudia paints all her paper black.

Claudia does not listen to the story that I'm telling. She wants another one, snatches books off of the bookcase, thumbs through their pages. One book lands in a corner of the library : "All of these books are damn nonsense!"

Now she feels like picking a fight with everyone.

Claudia stays put. Sitting on a cushion, she starts to cry then calms down : "All I want to do now is to sleep. Sleep forever."

Mr Hofer, a neighbor, goes by : "Things are going wrong where I live. Everything is head over heels. Yesterday, in the night, they came looking for Mr Morgenthaler."

That reminds me of what Mr Hofer said to me one day : "Other people say that extreme poverty doesn't exist in our country. That's something which kind of knocks you to pieces. You have a life without really being able to live it fully."

Often, in the Morgenthaler's home, the shutters are closed. It's as if the family did not really exist in the neighborhood.

One evening, I happen to meet Mr Morgenthaler in the street. This is the first time we've met.

"I've forbidden my children to keep on coming to your place. My wife has seen your Fourth World stand in the market-place down town. You just don't have the right to show other people what kind of a life we lead because once they know where we come from and who we are they slam the door shut as soon as they see us, wherever it may be and once and for all.

"And that's something which gets under your skin and stays with you. You feel humiliated ; you're ashamed ; your're frightened. That could drive you crazy...!

Now you take me ; not long ago, I broke everything in my house. They came looking for me ; they handcuffed me ; and they dragged me barefoot through the neighborhood. In the morning they said to me : "Well, have you calmed down ? Can we let you go home ?"I answered them : "What hell does it matter to you ? You don't change anything, anyway !" I had to go home barefoot."

We go on talking together for quite a while. Mr Morgenthaler speaks to me about the library : "I just couldn't believe that a place for children like this would be set up in our neighborhood. Children from everywhere ought to be able to come here. We could also go on an outing together one of these days, go to see things. Or, why not go to look at stars one of these evenings. I can remember when I was young, I was put in foster care in a farmer's home ; when I went looking for the animals, I can remember how I used to look at the sky and how impressed I used to be by the stars. But I had to make up my mind about all of this all by myself, because no one ever explained anything to me. I wasn't there for that kind of thing."

The eldest of Claudia's sisters opens the door for me : "Father says that you ought to come in".

The room is in a half-light. No furniture, the walls are bare, the wallpaper torn : a heavy feeling in the air.

Mr Morgenthaler is lying on the couch, rolled up in a blanket. His legs are bothering him.

"In this city, my family has always lived in barracks. Do you know what that means ? And then they separated us. I was put in foster care in one center after another. Everywhere I went I felt that they had put me there because elsewhere I'd just be one too many. And then they used to tell me that my parents were worthless good-for-nothings... I've never known what it meant to be loved and no one ever helped me to discover why it would be worth the trouble to try to get along in life. They've destroyed my brother. For the last 20 years, he has always been more or less confined.

"There are people who tell you how you should do things, there are other people who do them... As for me, I don't do anything at all... I'd like my children to succeed in life. But if they stay with me, they won't be able to, neither today, nor tomorrow, nor ever... I'm not a father for them... If I only knew how to be a father for them... I don't know how to... I'm nothing at all... Change something... First of all, you have to smash everything to bits, everything. Then we could begin a world built for human beings..."

Today Claudia is not willing to choose any story. She does not want to read or write either.

"Yesterday, you came to my house. That's true ! My father told me so ! In your house, do you also have a box which you have to put money into all the time, and then the light works ? You know, Rosemary, Beatrice, and I sleep with grandmother. When I wake up in the night, I listen to her breathing very heavily. Then I think that she's dead, and I'm frightened.

... Do you still have some notebooks ? I'd also like to write something now for the big book, but you must help me."

This is what she writes : "I'd like to be a baker, and for my family to have a big house where I'd have a bed of my own and where the toilets would not always be broken. Then people could come. The house would always be full of friends. Then it would be fun to be alive."

She hides her paper, then takes it home with her : "I don't want the other children to be reading it". However, she brings it back, all wrinkled up, to put it into the big book which everyone is getting ready and in which they talk about their lives, their dreams, and their joys.

Reading books enables her to discover a different world from the one she's used to in the street, or at home. A different world as well from the one she's used to at school where experience has taught her that her social group is judged and rejected.

Here, (in the library), she can discover a different world because she knows that her own counts just as much, that she does not have to abandon her daily life, her family, her environment on the doorstep.

She brings with her not only her thirst for learning, but also experiences and sorrows, unknown to other people. The street, the bars in her neighborhood, the dimly-lit appartment, the unpredictable schedule for sleep and meals : all of this is what her life is made up of.

Claudia is one of the four million children from European, Common-Market countries who, together with their parents, compose the Fourth-World. By Fourth-World we mean that population group, most of whose members have been born in the country where they're now living, and which is the victim of exclusion handed down from generation to generation. Its ways of thinking and its aspirations are scarcely taken into account whenever national and international choices and priorities are negociated.

When Father Joseph, the founder of the International A.T.D./Fourth-World Movement came to live and work with the poorest of the poor in the shantytown of Noisy-le-Grand in November 1956, he immediately understood that this population group had inner energy and ressources that it was able to obtain dignity, independence, and respect in the eyes of the outside world, but that to succeed in this endeavor, it had to get organized. To achieve this kind of organization, it needed tools for analyzing its situation ; therefore it needed knowledge and learning. And this was probably the basic intuition : "More than food and short-term aid, it was knowledge and learning that this population group needed". This is how the campaign for knowledge began, centered around books, the symbol of knowledge and learning and how "Learning to Learn in the Street" was created and developped throughout France, Europe, and the United States, and today in Third-World countries.

II "Learning to Learn in the Street"

Opening and developping "Learning to Learn in the Street" activities for which some people have left job-security or other kinds of security in order to live in the heart of that very underprivileged social group, have enabled us to put books into a brand-new, meaningful context, brought into being by the poorest of the poor themselves.

. "Learning means understanding who you are and what kind of a life you lead and being able to share it with other people ; it means being able to undertake all kinds of experiences which you go through not feeling humiliated ; but, on the contrary, feeling proud." This kind of learning is the basic condition of the improvement and promotion of the life of every human being worth living.

With this as a starting point, we may say that "Learning to Learn in the Street", whatever its style and shape may be in different sectors where it is set up (street library, art and poetry club, library in the fields) is :

- a place for the expression of children and their whole social group and environment ;
- a place for encountering another culture ;
- a place for sharing knowledge and learning.

A. A place for the expression of children and their whole social group and environment.

Over a number of years, emphasis has been put on how important it is for these children to talk about who they are, the lives they lead ; on how important it is for them to transmit, with dignity, essential ideas and feelings about life...

In any event, whether you want it or not a comment comes along ; shattering, unexpected, or violent. You have got to take it as it comes, and this is not always the way it happens. Like this French schoolteacher who, having heard a child say to her : "I have something to tell you ; Mom has bought me some new shoes", answered : "What do you want me to do with that kind of remark in class ; we were talking about autumn !"

In street libraries, art and poetry clubs, ..., therefore, you want to create a place where children can express their hesitations and their questions, where they can feel that even their long moments of silence are accepted : Peter, 8 years old, shows no interest for anything, walks along without looking or listening up until the day when he is turned on at the sight of a slug and all kinds of questions well up : "Why is it wet, why does it have horns, what does it eat...?" The answers given by the adult in charge as well as the time spent patiently waiting may have helped Peter to break out of the prison of silence. It's really indispensable to bring about, slowly but surely, this dialogue between children and adults. These intensive exchanges are absolutely necessary and at the same time very demanding : as a matter of fact, children are often too caught up in gestures, which are sometimes their only means of expression, to be able to communicate freely.

They don't use speech spontaneously ; either because they don't listen, or because they don't follow adult ways of thinking up to their conclusions, or because they react right away to the first words they happen to hear.

Two other reasons also discourage children from speaking : at home, they may not be listened to, they therefore get used to keeping quiet ; furthermore they sometimes don't know what is going to happen to them several minutes or hours later. And in a life broken up into bits and pieces, speech has little or no meaning. Quite quickly interest is likewise shown in other kinds of expression :

- such as writing for setting down, exchanging, and sharing things. In some localities, events which take place in art and poetry clubs are set down in newspapers which children write in order to show them to parents and to friends ; to bring important moments back to life. Children who don't know how to write dictate to the adult in charge.

- theater : children and adults in charge may create plays out of books which they have read and enjoyed. This is how they learn to gain skill in coordinating their movements and gestures, to get the most out of what they have to offer, but also to take account of other people.

- drawing, painting.

- "talking" with raw material : making pottery, small-scale models, making tools,ceramics.

B. A place for encountering another culture.

As we became aware how important it was to enable boys and girls from the Fourth-World to communicate their identity and daily experiences, we also understood that we had to avoid confining them : a lot of children refuse to let themselves be shut up in the world of extreme poverty and try hard to create an inner world of poetry and dreams... and in their games they try to make what they can't live in their everyday lives come true.

This is why most of the adults in charge have tried hard to step into this strong, dynamic current and to help boys and girls to get out of their daily world, to open up to the outside world.

And books are really a wonderful way to uphold this mind-broadening escape. Books are a basic element in encountering another culture. The term, "another culture", may seem to be unplausible ; but, for anyone who knows the Fourth-World, it's obvious that only a few bits and pieces of the culture which surrounds them ever really get to these families, and that these children have to succeed in a whole process of taking possession of knowledge and learning from the outside world.

When we talk about books and libraries, we're often thinking about people called readers. But we scarcely ever think about non-readers, about those who need books most because they don't know how to read, or barely guess at the meaning of words.

In 1975, an inquiry, in France, in a Fourth-World housing development, showed that families had access only to the poorest kinds of magazines : tabloids, horoscopes,... And yet they keep on aspiring strongly towards other sources of knowledge and learning since they are the very people who have been taught directly by experiences at their own detriment that someone who has knowledge always manages to get along in life and that someone who doesn't have any is forever a victim of unexpected situations and people. Therefore many Fourth-World people try to gain a kind of magic power over this force which is out of reach by reifying it. Even though they lack basic necessities, they buy sets of magnificent encyclopedias which they put carefully on the top of cloth closets as a symbol of unattainable knowledge.

But why have we deliberately taken a stand on the side of books ?

- Many children never become familiar with the written word : the few books they handle are school textbooks, poorly adapted to their expectations, and with respect to which they feel bound to fail. It follows that, for these children, any kind of printed matter is considered in the same perspective. These children are paralyzed by books and must therefore come to a new personal understanding of this symbol of knowledge.

- Books are the symbol of continuity. "I buy books for them because that's what lasts", said one mother in a housing development. Whereas you cannot have any direct hold over images shown on television, you can grasp printed matter completely, reading and rereading it, understanding causal relationships. Thus, for example, gaining awareness of the relationship which exists between a catepillar and a butterfly (vide, La Pomme et Le Papillon) is just fine when, as a matter of fact, you have so much trouble feeling inner unity and the unity between yourself and others.

- Books are easy to move around and can be taken anywhere (in the street, in a staircase, in the countryside). And, thanks to them, you can learn at your own speed.

- Books are also a way of taking on an identification with such and such a character ; and, going on from there, of finding your way back to your own personal history and experiences. After having discovered David and his friends in "La Boîte à Musique", children tell the story of their whole childhood : David has become one of their own. But there are still not enough books which talk about the history of poor people and their hopes.

- Books make other types of relationships possible. "Why"-questions spring from a wish to prove to yourself that you count for someone else, and getting an answer to them enables children to take on more of their true stature.

- And, lastly, books are an ideal tool for sharing knowledge and learning.

Here, briefly stated, are the reasons why we consider books to play such a vital role. But books alone would mean nothing if they didn't also go hand in hand with adults and the quality of their relationships with children. As a matter of fact we soon realized that presenting books in the Fourth-World can not be left up to improvisation or haphazard circumstances. And as it is very important to know books well and to enjoy them, it is also very important to know children and their social group well.

You have to be a person who is really enthusiastic about books, to pass on this enthusiasm and to create the right kind of atmosphere. An atmosphere full of calm, welcome, and enjoyment. But you don't want to have any illusions : climate is a fragile thing at the mercy of emotions and recent events of the day. That's why you must be ready to change activities, to direct attention in a different direction, tc propose other books, other points of view if the atmosphere is spoiled. That entails a readiness to change methods, places, and programs and constant attention paid to children's lives, needs, and questions ; because it's in the heart of all this that we must set down books as an answer, as a challenge to go further. And we could mention all the activities carried out with books as a starting point : making-up stories, writing a new draft-copy, turning out comic strips, painting ; activities planned either to bring children to books or to deepen and strengthen their discovery of books.

Yes, books may be a wonderful instrument for fighting against confinement, for taking possession of yourself and the world which surrounds you, for freedom ; but provided they are used intelligently.

C. A place for sharing knowledge and learning.

Nowadays, in most groups and institutions, people tend, often unconsciously, to grant privileges to those who already have the most, to those who already know the most. This encourages people to pile up what they gain and use it for themselves only ; this is how a sort of capitalization of knowledge takes place : those who encounter the most difficulties, who don't understand, are looked upon with distrust by the others ; because they delay progress and advancement for everyone else, because they are slower, they prevent discoveries, interesting debates, and, when this becomes too blatant people get together to make them leave the group.

In street libraries and art and poetry clubs, an effort is made to adopt a totally different attitude. Because he wants to help the most disadvantaged gain ground, the adult in charge must, as a matter of course, take steps to establish an atmosphere of sharing. This just does not happen automatically and the more enterprising children tend to help themselves to the lion's share. So they have to be constantly reminded that they also have a part to play in helping their friends. It is important for children to feel that they mean something in the life of someone else, in the life of other people, in the life of the adults in charge. As long as these latter only come to do activities, this will be impossible. They must go much further ; they have to get involved in this sharing too. The more they show their friendship with the most disadvantanged, the more opportunities children will have to become friends with one another.

Such a wager won't really win its way into existence until adults in charge have stayed a certain length of time in libraries (3-4 years).

When we look back on the starting point, we can be sure about one thing : street libraries and art and poetry clubs are intended to be places where those lucky enough to be well-educated try to set up worth-while projects for others, helped by adults in this endeavor.

This sort of sharing is made easier by the fact that inside the Fourth-World within the family itself life has imposed a community of interests : you have to take care of younger children, open your home to people less well-off even than you are. Moreover, being aware of their own difficulties and of those of their friends, even if we consider reading only, they have the feeling that all on their own they have little chance to get along well in life. But, in spite of this, you can't say that sharing knowledge occurs as a matter of course. To make sure that this will happen, we have to create an atmosphere where everyone trusts each other ; where those who can't read have to be able to admit this shortcoming without feeling ashamed, and that the others must accept it without teasing them. In other backgrounds, sharing may be a luxury item, but for the poorest of the poor it is a basic necessity.

When you want to share, regardless of what it costs, with an excluded population you must constantly invent new structures. Thus, in several neighborhoods, for example, after a while, staying inside the building itself was not enough. And activity sessions were organized in the street.

The street is the child's natural environment ; you can discover with him the world he's used to living in ; you can talk with him. Parents know about these activity sessions (they take place publically in the street) and they're well aware of what is going on. Sometimes parents participate ; they tell stories, and a conversation between grown-ups and children is established. The street offers means of communicating immediately the "hottest" current news. Children bring along their precious belongings, their pets,... whatever they like best.

By being used in the street, the book can also become part of the daily life in the neighborhood : adults in charge sit down at strategic points, places where people come together. Children pick up and spread around experiences on such and such a streetcorner with the adult in charge.

After all, the street library is the assertion of the importance of knowledge and learning, the right of knowledge and learning for everyone.

Here we're speaking about a setting where sharing is possible, in a building or in a street ; but we could imagine other arrangments like, for instance, a library in the family.

I would like to make a digression here to underline the importance of the parents' role. Until now we have scarcely mentionned them, but it would be a serious mistake to ignore them or to take their place : children will not gain access to knowledge, young people will have no future unless we consider as worthwhile spokesmen the very people who are never, or almost never, asked to give their opinion about their children whom some persons would even like to put into foster care.

If children feel that parents and adults in charge appreciate each other, that they enjoy exchanging points of view, they are bound to make the most of it ; because they are badly hurt when they see their parents underrated and trampled on.

It is characteristic of the Movement to want to focus attention on the child together with its family. We want the family as a whole to understand our actions fully. In the street, you are under the control of the family.

III Requirements in favor of the most disadvantaged children.

A. Programming and evaluation

Reactions of people listening to a presentation of the "Learning to Learn in the Street" activities are usually quite different : they range from pessimism to enthusiasm, including scepticism and strong desire for direct action. Each time, you have to bring the impact of the art and poetry club or the street library back to its right size and shape ; that means estimating results, clearly specifying goals to be sought after, consequently programming and evaluating action.

Programming proves to be essential in preventing actions led in favor of the poorest children from being taken over and retrieved by the most enterprising children. Furthermore, people from the Fourth-World are so used to living with the idea of emergency situations in mind that all actions we lead may be too strongly influenced by this atmosphere. If this rigor is not there, if this willingness to succeed is not there, any project will fall short of the mark, carried away by the torrent of everyday life. But this accuracy from the start must not prevent either flexibility nor adaptation.

In the same way, evaluation is also a real guarantee : because libraries may become a little world in and of themselves which could work without any contact with outside groups and institutions and which would push the children further and further towards the fringes of society. Moreover, it is very tempting to use libraries as a stepping-stone for the most active ones.

Programming and evaluation, carried out in common by all the Movement's teams, enable adults in charge to put the work they do into proper perspective and to take full advantage of other people's experience. In this way, they can take a clearer personal stand within the comprehensive project of the Movement in favor of the most disadvantaged.

B. Training

Whatever your background may be, working with the Fourth-World means working in a foreign country, coming into contact with people you never met before, and there is no bigger risk than to believe that you already know about this population. Good will is not enough either. This is why before starting any action new or full-time volunteers must first take time to extend their knowledge of the population, the Movement and actions being led by discussing with volunteers and reading the Movement's books.

C. Commitment

But above all, what is most important with library activities is not so much the books you propose as the commitment in relation with the under-privileged milieu. The under-privileged families have the right to know which solidarity we offer them : a solidarity with ideas coming from outside, or a solidarity with ideas originating in their own social group. Introducing a revolution in knowledge within their milieu must not be an action without issue, but a deep-seated project which may change the course of personal and group destiny. And this can happen only if they know us very well, because they don't pay attention to great ideas or theories but to human beings ; what matters is the adult in charge.

We cannot introduce ourselves as professionnals, technicians. We must be people from another world who listen to them and who let ourselves be taught by the poorest by sharing knowledge with them and accepting to re-think our beliefs and securities in order to build a world with more justice.

IV Prospects : towards a true democratisation of knowledge.

Thus, about one hundred street libraries create a dynamic current of motivation for reading and for sharing knowledge within a whole social group.

Encouraged by its 25 years of experience, the A.T.D. Fourth-World Movement asserts that working with the most disadvantaged children enables us to find new answers, original answers... universal answers. Destroying exclusion includes bringing about the access of everybody , and, as a priority, the access of the poorest, to knowledge and learning. Such a goal implies that the efforts towards democratisation of knowledge, carried on in all societies, reach out beyond organized groups, to those who are rejected.

This democratisation involves not only allowing the poorest to take advantage of culture, but also recognizing them as people endowed with a specific knowledge, essential in building a world of justice. "Knowledge, means understanding who you are, what kind of life you lead, and being able to share it with other people" (Joseph WRESINSKI, Founder and Secretary General of the International Movement A.T.D. Fourth-World).

In this perspective, books are a privileged means of liberation and communication. So, A.T.D. Fourth-World asks that the poorest groups be taken into account as a matter of priority by the national policies and the national programs dealing with books.

The Movement would like libraries to become aware of the unfair situation forced on to these children and to become aware, too, of their responsabilities towards the poorest children who have the greatest need of books and libraries.

A few propositions :

1. "Learning to Learn in the Street" is a relay in the direction of the school and the socio-cultural institutions (specially libraries).

Would libraries be ready to go outside of their walls, outside of the public building, to work not only with the school but also with associations in a ponctual or permanent way ?

The Movement has already made several experiments in cooperation with promising results.

2. The task to be undertaken is huge ; still hundreds of thousands of persons can't read or write. This is one of the reasons why extreme poverty still exists.

The action of "Learning to Learn in the Street" is characteristic of a pilot-project. But if we want to put an end to the unbearable illiteracy of Fourth-World children and Fourth-World families, all of us must work in this direction and each of us must realize that this population possess something unique to transmit.

Shouldn't we try to create a main-stream of understanding inside public opinion ? To secure access of the poorest to libraries, it is absolutely necessary to be supported by public opinion if we want librarians and users of libraries to change their mind and to accept listening to the Fourth-World chidlren. Thus, may be they will discover that those children reveal, and point implacably towards, the failures of our social structures and of our attitudes.

3. But, taking the poorest people as a starting-point is not automatic. We must train ourselves in getting to know this population group.

Wouldn't it be a good idea to introduce in the training of librarians training in the knowledge of the disadvantaged social groups and in dialogue with them ?

Isn't the first step meeting with the poorest of the poor:because they have more experience than other people with injustice and ignorance, Fourth-World people can denounce them better than anyone ; since ignorance and exclusion branded them in their body and in their own inner self, they are best able to bear witness to the thirst for recognition and learning which, like every other human being, they carry within themselves.

Isn't it from the poorest of the poor that society may learn in which direction to act so that Human Rights (particularly the Right to Knowledge) may become a reality for all citizens ?

Is there any better school than that which consists of listening to the poorest of the poor ?

If, within libraries, schools, adults in charge, teachers accept listening to children of the Fourth-World, they will perhaps discover that these children are building society, because it is not possible to meet extreme poverty without wanting to change something at once...

4. Innovations

Then these children will lead them along new pathways because listening to the poorest people's aspirations they find new answers they had not yet imagined.

Each librarian has to invent new technics from the experience he has with meeting the poorest people. Each one has to go further in examing his job by paying attention to the needs of the most disadvantaged. For example, in a library is the quantity of books more important than the quality of books ? How to make books more lively ?etc...

By doing so, libraries are preparing a near future full of innovations and hope for all children, since the poorest among them will take advantage of their innovations and research.

CONCLUSION

To think first about the poorest children in society is not an attitude that you would easily adopt. It is mostly believed that solutions proposed to middle-class children can suit children from a very poor social background. Experience proves the contrary.

To refer to all children, it is necessary first to refer to the poorest among them otherwise they would not even be mentioned in analyses, otherwise solutions and installations and equipment (among them : libraries) which aim at making opportunities equal for all would not even be used by them.

202/CHIL/E/140

IFLA
Children's Libraries Section

As soon as we began working with developing countries, we saw that this work has much to offer to industrial countries as well because problems that are emerging in developed countries are often the same as in Third World countries. We have the same problems for instance with illiteracy, special needs of minorites and the handicapped, the fact that children's reading is often limited by curriculum needs and is not considered from a larger point of view.

A consequence of the Seminar held in Leipzig is that it is now impossible to plan the working sessions of the Conference without including an active participation of the developing countries, without taking into account the main problems they have to face concerning children's reading. It is with this concern in mind that the Montreal working sessions have been prepared. The experiences led by colleagues in developing countries, the problems they meet, are a source of enrichment for the librarians of all countries, whatever their level of development.

The proceedings of the Pre Session Seminar in Leipzig will be published by Saur. The organizers in Leipzig are now transcribing all the reports and discussions presented in August 1981. Sigrun Hannesdottir and Geneviève Patte have agreed to be the editors for the English and French languages.

As an answer to members of the Seminar, it is suggested that members keep in touch so that it is possible to insure a follow up to the enriching considerations exchanged during the Seminar.

It is to be noted that some of the Resolutions of the Seminar have already been taken into account in a document prepared in London by the Unesco World Congress on Books, in June 1982.

Due to CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and IFLA, some experiences of children's libraries and children's book publishing are starting or developing, as a consequence of the meeting in Leipzig. Among them, developed in Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mexico, etc., we would like to emphasize the interest of the experimental work of home libraries started in Zimbabwe.

This movement of home libraries should spread in rural areas as well as urban areas and develop in connection with libraries, schools, nurseries, hospitals and all places where children congregate. This would help to establish the reading habit in very young children and

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also support the work done (by the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe) in encouraging the new literates to practice and implement their new reading skills by reading to their children.

It makes possible work with small groups of children to make reading and story telling/listening more familiar and meaningful. Emphasis is on out-of-school reading and reading as a personal experience. The home library concept, therefore, strives to reach the entire family, especially parents, either by having the help available, or by involving them by fostering an interest in their children's reading (even if they are illiterate they can discover a positive attitude towards reading). It makes everyone interested in reading, not only teachers and librarians. It creates an awareness in local people of their needs and thus encourages them to take up responsibility; it should help to develop the creation and publishing of local materials more adapted to the local culture.

IFLA, through its Section on Children's Libraries, could help to organize workshops on :

- creative writing
- publishing
- training on how to conduct home libraries.

It should help make modules for the training of home librarians with AV materials which could also serve for information of teachers, of parents
- building a central collection for books of bulk loans, if possible located in public libraries.

An expert should be trained for advising and training home librarians.

At least one bookmobile should help for distribution in the region. This work is very much connected with telling stories, creative writing, and by that should result in local publishing of children's books.

Help should also be given to the experimental publishing of material which could be largely tested in libraries.

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One of the current projects of the Section, carried on by Margaret Marshall McDonald, is oriented towards the less privileged countries. It is the Books For All project. Margaret Marshall McDonald reports :

"During 1981 nearly 10,000 dollars worth was donated by individuals and organizations towards the purchase of books for children's libraries. The donators were mostly from USA, Japan and Netherlands but individuals

in other countries sent money, often raised by sponsored events and other activities.

The donations were sent to organizations and library services in Fiji, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Philippines, Tonga, Turks and Caicos Islands and Zimbabwe. In some cases the unums helped to provide a community library where non existed, in others books were replaced after hurricane or flood or fire damage, and in some rural areas of African states, schools are receiving help to open their libraries to the local community where there is no public library.

The IFLA organiser has a long waiting list of libraries and community organizations, particularly in Latin America and the Philippines, desperate for help. More donations are urgently needed."

More generally, Margaret Wijnstrom appealed to the feelings of solidarity among members of IFLA. She suggested that each section and round table should get actively involved in fund raising for giving an opportunity to Third World colleagues to join in IFLA's work.

Children's Literature Abstracts

Report from Colin Ray : "Circulation of the Abstracts remains at the same level as previously, although the last year showed an increase in the number of entries - at 475, the highest yet. Following discussion at last year's Congress, letters were sent to all members of the Section Committee from countries so far unrepresented in the abstracts. This produced an immediate and welcome response from Nigeria, and promises (but no abstracts yet) from two other countries. It is a matter of regret that a solution does not seem to have emerged to the problem of making the representations more fully international.

Two other suggestions were raised at the discussions : for a more detailed analysis and classification of entries, and for the listing of books and pamphlets. As to the first of these, a more detailed grouping was introduced in 1981, following on the production of the cumulated index.

Considerable thought has been given to the inclusion of books and pamphlets; in principle we should welcome this, as much valuable information is "lost" in, for example, anthologies and collections. In practice, however, there are several problems which we cannot yet overcome :

1) what should be included ?
2) where should we get the information ?
3) would members be prepared to abstract such material ?

An answer to the first point above might be the publication of a parallel journal, perhaps once a year.

Library Service to Children

Steps are in hand to prepare the new edition of this IFLA publication. Invitations were sent to correspondents in 28 countries in January, and of these 20 have agreed to prepare new or revised articles by September 1982; further letters will be sent to the remainder. The opportunity is being taken to increase the number of countries covered, partly to remedy omissions inevitable in the last edition (1978), and partly to widen the coverage of Third World countries. The pattern of each article will be similar to the last edition, and it is expected that copy will be edited and delivered to the publications organisation of IFLA before Christmas 1982.

Education and training of children's librarians

The group now working on this project met in Kobenhavn in April. They worked on a questionnaire to be sent to a representative number of library schools. In February-May 1983, the group expects to have enough elements "to draw different usable models suggesting how to place children's librarianship teaching in the whole context of the library schools as well as of the universities."

Joint project : Section of Hospital Libraries & Section of Children's Libraries. Books for the mentally handicapped.

The compilers of the final draft of "Books for the mentally handicapped. A guide to selection", Margaret Marshall McDonald (United Kingdom), Sancia Simonis Rupert (Netherlands) and Suzanne Holst (Denmark) met in June 1982 in London. The final draft is now ready. It should be published within the coming months. It includes an outline of the criteria recommended for selecting books and audio-visual media for the mentally handicapped child and adult, and a chapter about library service to the mentally handicapped reader.

Round Table of Librarians representing documentation centres serving research on children's literature

The Round Table decided last year to hold a workshop in Munich.

One of the topics proposed is : What type of education should be required of a reference librarian working in the field of children's and youth's literature ?

The officers are working on a questionnaire which should help to find out more about the character of the study-centres and institutions. They are also working on a basic list of reference books.

Contacts with other sections and with the IBBY working group

Relations were initiated very naturally with the School Libraries Section when it was created, also with the Hospital Libraries Section, thanks to Margaret Marshall McDonald, a specialist of Hospital Libraries and former chairman of the Children's Libraries Section. The Section wishes to extend the principle of cooperation to other types of libraries. Thus, we now have regular contacts with the Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities Group, with the Regional Sections, and with the Library School Section.

According to a wish expressed in Manila, in 1980, a collaboration with international organizations is growing. It was very much appreciated during the preparation of the Leipzig Presession Seminar in 1981. The help of UNICEF (United Nations Centre for Children's Cultures) and of IBBY (International Board of Books for young people) were essential. In many countries IFLA members are participating actively in IBBY's local work. IBBY has now a consultative status with IFLA.

This year, three participants of the Pre Session Seminar will receive financial support from UNICEF for joining the IBBY Conference, on the invitation of IBBY. Good example of cooperation ! This was made possible by the collaboration developed between IBBY and IFLA in the preparation of the Seminar.

UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) for its tenth anniversary, launched a world wide campaign on the theme "For every child a tree". Mairuth Sarsfield, Senior Information Officer for UNEP, had the idea of addressing children through children's libraries and of asking well known illustrators of children books to design posters and material for exhibitions on the theme. The following illustrators : Heidi Lange, Eric Carle, Mitsumasa Anno, Bjorn Wiinblad, Jorg Muller, the Oodi Weavers of Botswana and folk artists from China, Haiti, Mexico and Papua New Guinea worked for the project. Many libraries organized manifestations on trees, ecology, protection of environment, etc. The Children's Libraries Section and IBBY helped in various ways (mailing list, information through professional magazines, contacts with some illustrators, etc.).

Another international movement, ATD-Quart Monde (Fourth World) had asked IFLA for cooperation. Its chairman, Joseph Wresinski, wished IFLA to take into account the concerns of the most unprivileged people. This led to the choice of the topic of the section's working sessions in Montreal and to the elaboration of a questionnaire which was sent to all members of the section. Although the answers were scarce, let us hope it helped the librarians to prepare their mind in view of the Montreal discussions, and, in the long run, to handle their work with this public.

Now a few words for the conclusion. The work done by the Section these last years, shows how essential and interesting it is that librarians recognize the variety of cultures that exist in industrialized countries as well as in Third World countries (The Fourth World is to be found in all countries). The place to begin children's reading and the specific needs of children in each country. The problems of illiteracy we are facing all over the world have perhaps the same roots : we are indeed too rigid when we restrict reading to school needs. The experience in Zimbabwe shows the power of reading. When the lovers part, because the man must work far away and the woman has to stay in her village, she has to be able to read the letters that he sends. She wants to read them by herself, in privacy, and not be obliged to find someone to interpret them for her. It is the same thing for blind people and for handicapped persons of all kinds.

Reading is a tool for every one, it is a way to understand oneself as well as a mean of access to social communication. Let's find out how reading can play a vital part in children's life today, even at the youngest age. It is the best way to begin the process of a personal culture, of a life long education.

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE 1982

DIVISION : LIBRARIES SERVING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

SECTION: CHILDREN'S LIBRARIES

LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY

Nita Vegamora NORMAN
Branch Head/Children's Librarian
Chicago, Illinois
U.S.A.

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LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY

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Who are the disadvantaged children?

My research failed to come up with a satisfactory and comprehensive definition of the term, "disadvantaged". Authorities agree that disadvantaged is a subjective and relative term impossible to define. To illustrate: a refugee child, who settles in a ghetto in the United States, may be considered economically deprived, but may be better off than his classmates and playmates back in his homeland at least materially.[1]

In order to measure economic deprivation and to determine the extent of want and need, the United States Government has adapted a minimum income standard, "enough" to support a family of four.[2] Hence, a couple with two children, whose annual income is $8,500.00 is considered to be at the poverty level. The U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1981. shows a sharp increase in the number of families below the poverty level in the United States: 5.3 million in 1970, to 6.2 million in 1980.

True, libraries cannot provide food, clothing and shelter or cure physical ills; but libraries can help the disadvantaged in one way or another by re-orienting their thinking, and by providing them with tools to develop and sharpen their potential abilities and natural talents.[3]

The environment of the disadvantaged child may be characterized as one or more of: fear and insecurity, jobless or low-income

parents, overpopulated and dilapidated housing, a broken home, inadequate diet and absence of love and understanding. He may be a United States citizen or a child of legal or illegal immigrants, may speak a language other than English; he may be poor in communication skills; enjoys no healthy relationship with adults; whose only response to frustration may be physical. His physical features, cultural background, language and education may be different from others, nonetheless, he suffers from common elements of deprivation.

Because of limited time and space, this paper deals primarily with the information gathered through a mailing of 652 questionnaires sent to children's specialists of randomly selected public libraries from almost 9,000 libraries in the United States in March, 1982 and a sampling of articles published from 1975 on, thereby, minimizing the change of bringing into focus terminated or non-existent programs. This paper intends only to give an overview of existing library services to meet the needs of the disadvantaged children in the United States. Ommission of any productive and effective on-going programs is by no means intentional.

Library services to disadvantaged children and ethnic minority defined in this paper refer to activities and programs conducted in addition to, or in lieu of general library services,with the intention of meeting the needs of the economically deprived and ethnic minority children in the United States.

The demand for library services for disadvantaged children grows as their numbers increase. American Public Libraries are quick to respond, as may be seen in the return of 572 out of 652 questionnaires.

* 89 reported serving middle, upper middle class and bedroom communities.

* 388 know their communities and have programs extended to or directly for disadvantaged children.

* 64 are not aware of the existence of disadvantaged in their communities.

* 93 serve communities that may be entirely characterized as disadvantaged; general library services are available.

* 356 of the 388 libraries conducting programs expressed frustration because of their apparent failure to bring disadvantaged children to the library. Children come with groups.

* 162 of the 388 libraries conducting programs, have no children's area, and no children's specialist.

* 502 of the 652 sample libraries conduct regular school vists, ranging from once a week to twice a year, depending on staffing.

* 234 of the sampling libraries have prepared programs for group visits and, volunteered that they in turn learn from the children. They also stated that most children return to the library.

* 136 have toys, games and puppet collection, with varying degrees of usage.

* 86 expressed concern that due to a cut in Federal Aids to libraries, their programs may be terminated in due time.

Programs discussed in this paper are a sampling of the efforts of the American libraries to meet the growing need and demand for library services for the economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority children in the United States.

TOYS, GAMES, PUPPET COLLECTION

Educational toys, games, puppets and other perceptual materials have become standard collection in many public libraries in the United States. Well designed toys and games provide the young child pleasure in developing his intellectual faculties and physical skills, Among the 136 libraries surveyed which feature toy collection

exists a variance as to quantity, quality and in the extent of toy usage. Many libraries limit toy use to inside the library facility. Others circulate them like other library materials, still others go as far as delivering toys to the children in their homes. Toys in the collection are selected primarily to re-inforce pre-reading skills and to encourage fantasy related activities. Greenburgh Public Library (N.Y.) the Prince George's County Memorial Library System.(Md)[4] and the Columbus and Franklin Public Library (Ohio) use their toy collection to foster responsibility among disadvantaged children, by encouraging care of toys and other library materials. Richland County Public Library assists the low-in-come children through the loan of story time kits. That project aims to serve the disadvantaged children in day care centers.[5]

The Lakeview, Garfield Ridge, Woodlawn and North-Pulaski branches of the Chicago Public Library (Ill.) with an initial grant from the Oppenheimer Family Foundation and Pilsen Branch through a grant from the Friends of the Chicago Public Library; have educational toys available for loan for a two week period. The objectives of the program are to meet the needs of the vast number of children whose parents cannot afford educational toys, and to introduce the young children to the library at an early age.[6]

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Due to distance, reaching a library is one of the difficulties most disadvantaged children face. To help solve the problem, public libraries in the United States make use of more than nine hundred (900) bookmobiles and vans.[7] thereby taking library services to the children who would otherwise not go or could not go to a library. Some public library system have branches within one mile of each other to facilitate access to library services.

Brooklyn Public Library (N.Y.) with its rolling van provides "Sidewalk Services using rock and roll music to attract its target clientele. Librarians read to the children at curbs, at street corners, in parks and housing projects.[8] The Monmouth County Library (N.J. with its "Storymobile" provides day and night story telling and film programs in English and Spanish.[9] Likewise, Dallas Public Library's bookmobiles (Tex) provide library services at 55 stops in various areas of the city.[10] The State of Minnesota, Department of Education, Library Section, conducts workshops regarding services to the disadvantaged. With its bookmobiles, library services are brought to the Indian Reservation.[11] The Forsyth County Library (S.C.) with its "Children's Outreach" program, promotes reading and the use of existing library resources among disadvantaged and non-library user children. The program includes mini libraries in recreational and community centers; field trips and tutoring for low-in-come children; and training workshop for adults working with disadvantaged children.[12]

STORYTELLING

Storytelling programs with varying formats are offered by most public libraries in the United States. Librarians do it in English, Spanish, Chinese, Pilipino, French, as the needs arise. Activities consists of stories, finger plays and other library related activities. For example: the Mountain View Public Library (C.A.) offers a "Free Reading Readiness" program. Activities include body movement, exercises, and finger plays for motor development; circle games, creative dramatization, short movies/audio-visual presentation and a short period of free play.[13] A Similar format is used at Pilsen Branch, of the Chicago Public Library (Ill.) making use of of its toy collection for free play.

READING PROGRAM

Reading programs under various names are conducted regularly by most public libraries in the United States in an effort to attract non-library users and disadvantaged children. Programs range from informal reading to a formalized contract. Summer reading programs are the most popular and highly acclaimed both by the children's librarians and the children themselves. To make summer reading more exciting, more enticing; some children's librarians re-inforce their theme with fanfare, publicity gimmicks and games centered at its theme. Reading prizes vary from buttons, iron-on-patches, membership cards, certificates, balloons, posters and school supplies to french fries and hamburger coupons.[14]

"Wizard of Oz", "Monster Club", and "Robin Hood and His Merry Band Readers", are system-wide reading activities at the Chicago Public Library (Ill.) Individual branches conduct reading activities geared to meet the needs of their immediate communities. Damen Avenue Branch has its "Damen Demons Reading Club"; "Penny Counting Reading" and "Back to School Reading" at Pilsen Branch and "Bear Club" at Eckhart Park Branch.[15]

The Chicago Public Library (Ill.) offers a variety of programs aimed at serving the economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority children of the city of Chicago. Programs vary in emphasis, nature, scope, quality and purpose. The following are among the more successful:

HUMAN SERVICES,(AUGMENTED LIBRARY PROGRAM), funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program on its 12th year is conducted in eight (8) branches of the Chicago Public Library, with sixteen Library Assistants under the supervision of

a Director. The program serves pre-school and school age children from forty-three (43) agencies in the economically disadvantaged target areas. Activities comprise library orientation, story telling, book talks, games, finger plays, songs, plays, puppet shows, group discussions, films and other library related activities. Each child is encouraged to check out up to five books at a time. Mamie Grady, Director of the program has this to say:

> "I have observed the growth of our participants in their ability to talk, to listen and to read through books and book related materials they have learned about their culture... Our program opened their eyes and ears. They saw movies on subjects they would never see on television, through record they learned songs of other cultures, and from exposure they learned to look and really see. I know they have developed an interest in reading when they come back to the library... as intermediate and high school students using the library resources for pleasure as well as for classroom assignments.[15]

In summer, when schools are closed, outreach programs are conducted to provide library services to children confined in hospitals; each participating branch library serving one hospital. The Library Assistants take books, show movies, give book talks, sing songs, and play with the children confined.[16]

SUMMER TUTORING

Funded by the Mayor of Chicago's Summer Youth Employment program, the Summer Tutoring is in its 5th year, providing structured tutoring for elementary school children of designated target areas. It is designed to keep children "off the street", and to provide a meaningful work experience for the young people hired as tutors. The goals of the program are to improve reading skills and to assist children with reading problems. Children whose reading ability is below their school level and those who wish

to maintain and improve their skills are encouraged to register. Lunch and reading materials are provided. Ten (10) branches of the Chicago Public Library (Ill.), located in the target areas are participating in the program.[17]

LIBRARIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

The Chicago Housing Authority, operates a network of public housing units in the city of Chicago. Some units are low-rise, garden type, two-story apartment complexes; other are massive high-rise buildings. For the most part, these housing projects are located in slum pockets of the city of Chicago. The overwhelming number of occupants are black, many of them are women with young children and single-parent families, a preponderance of the residents being children.

On July 1, 1945, the Chicago Public Library opened its first library in the Children's Building of the Altgeld Housing Project. With the cooperation of the Chicago Housing Authority the Chicago Public Library has since opened six (6) extension libraries six (6) housing projects with approximately 80% of their users children.

ADOPT-A-SCHOOL

Two branches of the Chicago Public Library (Ill.), located in the economically disadvantaged areas are among the city-wide organizations participating in the Chicago Public School's program,"Adopt-A-School". Both branches intend to see that each child/ student in the participating schools obtains a library card and to make library resources more accessible to the students through library related programs and activities to be conducted either in the library facility or in the adopted schools. All participating agencies are located in areas which by government standard may be

characterized as at or below poverty level.

Resources for librarians concerned with library services to disadvantaged children are available from the American Library Association's Office of Library Outreach Services and its Advisory Committee, as well as from the Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged Child, committee of the Association of Library Service to Children.

My working with economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority children has afforded the opportunity for professional growth, personal enrichment, and first hand in-service training in child psychology. I love working with children, see them grow and mature; and would like to share with you some of my experiences. As a librarian of the generalist approach (I presume I am under the circumstances) I can better reach the low-income, non library user parents and their children. Children, who received positive impressions at their first contact with the library, will surely bring their parents the next time around. It is unfortunate that the effectiveness of library services is measured mainly by circulation numbers, without apparent regard for human efforts.

To attract the economically disadvantaged and the non-library user ethnic minority children to the library, outreach activities: school visits, participation in outdoor Arts and Crafts Festivals and parades; attendance at community meetings and activities, Parents-Teachers Association, school faculty meetings, stopping by laundromats are worthwhile tools. Meanwhile, at the library we conduct two (2) story hours weekly; adults' and children's arts classes; movie programs; and variety of reading programs and contests above all a friendly smile; a warm welcome, particularly for the

first comers; and the children will surely come again and again. The results are gratifying , an appreciable increase in circulation (42-52%) in one year and, that good feeling of wholesome accomplishment. Off course, we do have an occasional adult-patron complaint: too many children, too noisy, but that is a price we pay.

When a child who regularly comes to the library suddenly stops coming, I try to find out why through his friends. Should he return, I tell him he has been missed and not to stay away too long. This does work if said with sincerity.

With parents who refused to allow their children to have library card (to take a book home) I send a short note or call, explaining the free library services, emphasizing that their child is intelligent, has potential, and library materials can help him. Some parents are only too happy to hear from me, others just refuse. To build a rapport with children and their parents, it is important to know them by name, to acknowledge them even outside the library and to sit down and talk with them on subjects of interest to them. Further, the staff and I recruited student volunteers and have found this to be most beneficial.

FUTURE OF CHILDREN SERVICES

Many articles about problems that beset children's services have appeared in library literature in recent years. The writers suggest a weakening and decline of young adult and children's services within the profession due to administrative changes in administrative philosophy. Further, children's librarians are accused of devoting too much of their time to children literature and too little to preparing for and determining their goals and objectives. They are blamed for failing to justify their budget

demands and for their inability to document the success and validity of their services.[20] Sullivan commented,"Good children's librarians or elementary school librarians are so engrossed in their real work that they have neither the inclination nor the competence to analyze their efforts."[21] This was of course rampant among all librarians until this year of accountability.

Library administrators, on the other hand, are quick to claim diminishing demands for children's services in order to justify the elimination of the position of children's services coordinator and a number of children's librarians. Children's services, traditionally revered as a jewel in the crown of public library services, seems to have lost its luster and its charms.[22]

The very existence of the children's specialist appears threatened by growing trends: a move from the specialist approach to the generalist approach in providing library services; and the development and implementation of a school and public library network. The generalist approach adapted by Baltimore County Public Library (Md) implies that in spite of individual interest, personal talents, attitude and special training generally trained public service librarians are better able to meet the needs of the public with greater efficiency. As a result, children's librarians are slowly vanishing, absorbed perhaps in the process of transition. With the generalist approach all library staff become responsible for all aspects of library services without isolating age-group level.[24]

At present many local branch collections are integrated, not only to facilitate the process of absorbing the generalist approach and to lessen the workload of a shrinking staff, but also to make

it easier for low-reading adults, unfamiliar with library procedure to locate needed materials without embarrassment.

The once secure and rewarding profession of children's specialist, faced with growing pressure and the alleged insensitivity of the administration to their plight; coupled with the seemingly indifferent parents and the unmotivated children, seems to be in real danger of a possible extinction. The result is an exodus of many dedicated and hard working children's librarians to other areas in the library profession. Sadly, many go on to careers in other fields.

The future role of the children's specialist may be determine by economics and the availability of funds: by the growing trend of cooperation between public library and public schools; by the declining numbers of children; by the effects of computer technology, and by a process of re-evaluation of the goals and objectives of libraries , particularly public libraries in the United States. As funding continues to shrink, school enrollment declines and school librarians are replaced by volunteers/teachers, the future becomes bleak. Will a baby boom and alternative private funding save the role of children's specialist? Will the future effect a return to the days when the children's specialist was a jewel in the crown of library public services?

Since library services to disadvantaged children and the role of children's specialist depend on each other, how will these changes affect library services to disadvantaged children? will library services to disadvantaged children be eliminated from the future library functions? If so, what will become to free access to information and the disadvantaged child?

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Division: Libraries serving the General Public

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129/SCHO
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158-RE

The Centralized Automation of National Centres to Networking in SCHOOL LIBRARIES

by

D. REUMER, NBLC, The Hague, NL

Joint meeting with the Section on school libraries on Wednesday 25 August:
9.00 - 10.30

The Centralized Automation of National Centres to Networking in School Libraries by D. Reumer, chairman ROTNAC

To be able to say something about this subject it might be necessary to explain first what ROTNAC is and what a national centre is.

What Is ROTNAC?

ROTNAC is the abbreviation for the Round Table of National Centres for Library Services. This Round Table is part of the IFLA Division of Libraries Serving the General Public. The aims of the Round Table are the promotion of cooperation between members, the exchange of information on new developments or plans, the comparison of working methods and results, and the promotion of centralized services in other nations.
At the moment ROTNAC consists of 12 members, mostly centres from Western Europe.
ROTNAC has established a number of permanent or temporary working groups, made up of specialists from the centres in which a specific area of central services is under discussion. One of them is the working group on school-libraries.

What Is a National Centre for Library Service?

Although you now know what ROTNAC is - - an IFLA Round Table, and what its aims are, you still don't know what a national centre is. A national centre is an institution which provides central services to libraries and schools. Central service consists of those activities which comprise or should comprise the actual basic tasks of every library, but which are carried out nationally for the sake of improving quality and efficiency. Thus, central services provide materials to support libraries in carrying out the following basic tasks, for example:

- acquisition, storage, retrieval and processing of books and other information materials
- lending information materials
  providing guidance to the readers in searching for and selecting information materials.

Within these fields of activity numerous offers are made to libraries, both in the form of publications from the suppliers of library furniture or the actual supply of library furniture and library equipment, as well as in the form of subscriptions to publications.

The legal form of the central service organization can differ from country to country. For example, in Sweden it is a firm; in the Netherlands it is a part of the library association.
However, a central service organization must first have a distinct connection with the government and/or with libraries or librarians who are able to influence the policy and management of the centre directly. Second, a centre should be self supporting, but any profit made should not be used for private or personal gain.
Also, a completely private firm on a commercial basis is rejected from membership. This is because the commercial aspect might lead to a restriction of service because non-profitable business would not be carried out in that case, or would take second place to profit-making ventures. Certainly this argument would be valid for relatively small markets in education. It is better to view a national centre as part of the entire library network. Persons interested in this work should have a place in the organizational and managerial structure of such a network.

What Are the Advantages of the National Centres?

The benefits of the national centres are particularly significant for reasons of quality and economy. In practice it appears that it is possible for the national centres to hire specialized employees. This does not mean that these employees are better than the librarians in the local public libraries or in school libraries. However, they do have the possibility for a broader orientation and better possibilities for cooperation and consultation with those who are directly involved in school library work.
This brings about a pooling of knowledge including that of provisions existing in the country at the local and provincial levels. Furthermore, reliable information on quality can be disseminated in writing, or in meetings with other persons professionally interested in school library work.
Economic benefits are also quite large. The activities performed centrally (or which can be done centrally) include savings on manpower, but also savings on materials, printing costs, etc. In some countries schools receive a higher discount from the publishers because of central book binding.

Through central service many working costs are saved. Where many others do the same work, the work can be duplicated and distributed by few persons. In the Netherlands it has been computed that per year for school libraries and public libraries together, a savings of approximately Dfl 150,000,000 (or US $ 55,000,000) is realized. Another way of saying this is that the price that one must pay a central service organization is only 10 percent of the personnel cost that one would have if this work was done exclusively in each library. With this savings in work hours, many other tasks could be done, including those in the sphere of information and help for users. In a number of cases activities could not even be started without the cooperation of a national center.. (Restriction of activities will occur even more often in the future because of the economic situation.)

Special Central Service to School Libraries

In general, the role of the national centres will be specifically geared to organizing services to the schools, assuming that the schools possess a school library of their own. These school libraries are not entirely self-supporting, i.e. they do not include all materials being used in the schools. However, this does vary per country.

Two aspects can be distinguished when using school libraries:

- the educational aspect - the use of school libraries in the educational process. It is difficult to say something in general on this subject, because education is organized in a different way in the various countries and has different content. The schools are primarily responsible for this, within the framework provided by their authorities.
- professional library aspect --the library network in which the public library can offer support to the schools, particularly in the field of technical aspects in setting up and administering school libraries and delivering supplementary collections. The public libraries possess, or they should at any rate, the knowledge and the means. The national centres are part of this network. Even more the centres promote the realization of the networking of school libraries.

Central services will work only if certain standards in cataloguing and classification are introduced and applied. These standards are applicable for school libraries as well as for public libraries. In this way the central service opens the door to the networking of public libraries for school libraries through which a good cooperation can be achieved. This is especially of interest, because many school libraries cannot independently supply the materials needed. It is also of interest because in almost all school libraries are no professional workers.

Thus, by making it possible for school libraries to fill the gaps as far as quality and quantity are concerned -- and especially by providing ready-made systems and materials -- the networking in school libraries is strongly promoted through central service.

What Kind of Central Service Is Supplied to Schools?

In the first place the centres help (whether through public libraries or not) with the setting up, the control and the organization of school libraries by providing information and advice on the spot. Regardless of organization, the tasks of national centres include:

- Aids for selection and purchase of books and audiovisual materials.
- The supply of information on books and audiovisual materials. This can, for instance, be done by composing reviews, bibliographies, and catalogues.
- Central cataloguing (including classifying) and promoting the use of one system
- Publication of recommended/advisory lists (book lists)
- Publication of other forms of professional literature
- Advice on professional library aspects concerning the set-up and administration of school libraries
- Binding and processing of books and audiovisual materials, in order to enable schools to make prompt use of them in teaching
- Provision of materials for the school libraries, for example, catalogue cards, guide cards and other professional library aids
- The supply of library furniture and advice on building and equipment for school libraries (architectural services)
- The organization of professional contacts with persons interested in school library work, including national and regional authorities.

In What Way Is the Central Service Given?

In most countries in which a national centre is a member of ROTNAC, service is also provided to the schools. Often schools can make use of a specialized service. This may, for instance in a number of technical matters, be equivalent to the service to public libraries. However, materials and publications destined in particular for the schools are also prepared. Contacts between schools and public libraries are deemed very important. In the Netherlands the ties with the schools are indirect. The Dutch national centre supports the public libraries and the provincial library centres. They maintain the direct contacts with the schools. In all cases, however, a good contact must exist between all of those interested in the work. Committees involved in policy preparation may serve this purpose, but both those in the educational sector and librarians must be involved in the practical execution of policy. Therefore, working groups are needed for the preparation of recommendations, publications, and materials for other tasks to be executed centrally.

Future

Because of the work of the centres, especially through the promotion of standardization and their connection with the public library network, the school libraries will be able to profit by the technical developments in library work. Because of the deteriorating economic situation, which concerns the schools as well as the libraries, the extension of activities for schools will remain restricted. However, in a number of countries plans are being developed to arrive at:

(1) an integration of the services for school libraries and other children's libraries;
(2) an extension of services to the variety of school forms, that is, children's education of 4 to 6 years, and the high schools;
(3) an extension of the services of school libraries to adult education and to education for minorities.

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ORIENTATION AND EXTENSION OF A PROGRAMME OF MINI-LIBRARIES IN VENEZUELA

Bruno RENAUD
Banco del Libro
Caracas, Venezuela

Meeting
128

In these few pages we propose to explain briefly the intention and the beginning of a programme of mini-libraries at present being carried out in Venezuela. We don't want to boast, we don't claim to be presenting the only solution to the problems of training, information and community life. We just want to describe the meaning, orientation of an experiment taking into account the needs, conditions and limits of a one Third World country among others.

Introduction : Aims of culture in Venezuela

Before coming to the main point, it is not superfluous to give briefly a picture of the background. A few words, then, about our country.

Considering only the economic and cultural aspect, Venezuela would not seem to be in good odour among the so-called developed countries. Venezuela is something like the Saoudi Arabia of Latin America; it is the "nouveau riche" of the continent, greedy for publicity and ostentatious luxury. The Venezuelian admit this with a certain sense of humour. Not long ago a very successful national film openly made fun of their fellow countrymen who consider themselves above all as citizens of "our Miami" where they belong to the "Tabarato-Damedos" Tribe ("esta barato, dame dos", it means : "it's dirt-cheap, I'll buy two of them !"). The owner-classes, by means of the mass media, have no trouble in instilling the consumer-society philosophy into the minds of the proletarian classes. There is, all the same, a gulf between the rich and the poor as in many new countries, and it must be recognised that the efforts of successive governments to combat this fundamental injustice have not succeeded. At the political level, however, our country has probably a better reputation. Our possession of oil gives a certain stability - rather artificial - to the national life and its political institutions. The democratic government, too formal and still imperfect, even gives us a superiority complex with regard to most other Latin-American countries.

Here are four conclusions to this brief analysis :

1) All efforts towards culture in our country should be an answer to the invasion of foreign culture (economic, political, social) of which we are too often the willing victims; these efforts should be directed to deepening national consciousness. Our work for culture through reading cannot be neutral if we are to fight the threat of the destruction of native culture.

2) Right from the start, the effort of spreading libraries should combat, not the passive acquisition of goods in itself, but the consumer society as it exists in Venezuela. We should contribute to re-establishing the balance between invention and utilisation, between the creator and the user, so that both roles may be played by the same person.

3) In order to take charge of the very society where we work it will be necessary to favour the least favoured, i.e. those whose social, economic or geographical situation cuts them off from power, from political divisions, and from the distributors of goods and services. Here again the people's libraries cannot remain neutral when confronted with this painful division of our society. The choice of site, the contents of the programme, the orientation of our efforts, the selection of material (books, etc.) must contribute to the creation of harmonious structures, and to the giving of knowledge and power to those too often deprived of it.

4) If our system of government does not yet greatly favour participation by the people, the library, on the contrary, should provide a training school for decision-making. Power with its expression ought to be more evenly shared; or in other words, because of the social inequalities in our country at present, being educated to act and to think should help those on the fringe of society to gradually take an active part in its transformation, capable of planning their own lives and also society life. This shows once again that the library in our country cannot soar above the material difficulties and faults of our national life; on the contrary, it must be instrumental in correcting the social vices and injustices of all kinds.

However, it would be premature to be either scared or over-enthusiastic on hearing these observations which, unfortunately, are rather good resolutions than practical conclusions. Indeed we are too realistic to forget the weight of mental structures and all the other obstacles; these prevent our desires from becoming imperative, lightening programmes. The result of our efforts to increase the number of mini-libraries is still small and vulnerable; finally, having such a utopic vision and such a strong conviction of the potential importance of the library in the cultural, social and political transformation of our country and its people, we may consider that what we actually achieve from day to day is agonizingly slow and feeble. That is what we are going to analyse by describing the model (in sociological terms) mini-library.

The origin of the mini-library

The mini-library barely exists and yet it was not born overnight. It came into existence by the meeting between a flexible, dynamic Venezuelian institution - the "Banco del Libro" - and the work of several "culture volunteers".

First the "Book Bank". This private non profit-making association was itself founded by volunteers. At first its sole function was to facilitate the exchange of school-books by poor pupils; this explains the name of the Institution, Banco del Libro. But each year, encouraged by success, the aims were diversified and today the Book Bank acts as a Documentation Centre dealing with librarianship, pedagogics, literature for the young, as a non-academic training school for librarians, as a publishing house for quality books especially in the field of children's literature, as a structure for experiments in library services (school and public libraries, including mobile libraries), as a workshop for the creation of games and didactic programmes, etc. The "Book Bank" whose annual budget is always very precarious, does not seek to form a network distinct from the official libraries network. Their idea, on the contrary, is to invent and test out the most suitable techniques and methods in the field of books and libraries in order to transfer them afterwards to the bodies concerned, and in the first place, of course, to the national network of libraries which is part of a State institution.

And next the culture volunteers. Volunteers for culture or for social service, for this soon became the conviction of the young budding librarians (they were then 15 or 16 years old) : the book could not be an end in itself; knowledge is only an instrument for further plans; for certain people it will be a question of economic or political domination and the tentacular extension of power; for others, among whom we count ourselves, the aim will be the joy of understanding life and the world around us, the desire to control one's own destiny, individually and collectively, the concern of taking into one's own hands the reins of life and actively assisting in the setting up of a less anarchic, less brutal social order. Not that these volunteers were capable of expressing all that, the day that in a room less than 12 m. square, with no project, no ideas, no ambition, and without external help, a mini-library opened with ... two books. The first patrons of this mini-library were some children from a suburban district of Caracas

and they soon obliged it to increase its stock of books and to propose a variety of leisure and instructive activities. Books were sought in all possible places : privately, from embassies, from official bodies, etc. Some were bought thanks to the financial aid of a few friends. At the same time means were sought to reduce the distance between book and poor child by introducing such techniques of expression as drawing, games, singing, acting.

But all that soon proved insufficient and it was just then that the meeting occurred between an institution open to research and these volunteers in action. The "Book Bank" offered its experience and its means : the travelling book-case (100 to 200 books lent for a month, constantly renewed) and then the book-mobile run jointly by the volunteers and the institution staff. Finally the "Book Bank" decided to give its full support to the work of the volunteers and to try out a new type of library which would reduce, as far as possible, the traditional barrier between formal culture and the needs of the working class people. From that time onwards a few of the volunteers became part of the institution's paid staff, spontaneously maintaining the vitality and enthusiasm of pionneers.

Undoubtedly, then, the meeting between the voluntary workers and the specialised institution was beneficial to everyone : for the local workers themselves who started a course of training where theory and practice were constantly intermingled; for the "Book Bank" which saw its field of action enlarged and was then able to come closer to that part of the public sais (half unjustly perhaps) to be difficult and apparently uinterested in culture; for the inhabitants of a densely populated barrio, who not only sometimes discovered that books were not necessarily frightening, but were also able to partbcipate actively in the drawing up of programmes. They thus learned to shake off that crushing passivity so often cause and consequence of being rejected to the fringe of society.

Nowadays, and in order to meet local needs, the programmes developed by this library, no longer really a "mini" one, are in theory of unlimited diversity, and in practice quite numerous. With the children, for instance (who are a little more than 60 % of our public), in addition to reading itself and the lending of books, we organize, or have had at one moment or other, a succession of small workshops such as : handiworks based on telling of tales, puppets and theatre, dance, singing and music, ceramics, gym, games of chess, training for handicrafts, maths games, elementary

scientific experiments, gardening, editing of a little newspaper, etc. Of course activities are more difficult with the young, owing to the precariousness of their milieu. Avoiding all school methods, the point is to go through into our knowledge of the country, our belief in national culture, the need to participate in local life, and this is done with their active cooperation. Thus we develop friendly clubs, study and reading groups, courses on sexual information, workshops for serigraphy, ceramics, music, etc. For adults, we try to launch programmes mainly about problems of education, infrastructure of public services but, more important, we try to set up permanent groups in view of local action; in such groups, through very little and limited projects, the people may have an actual experience of success and the indispensable training of their own capacities, opportunities they seldom have although it is quite necessary for personal and community fulfillment. This explains the creation of courses on ceramics, natural and unexpensive food, sewing and making of trousers for children, macramé and flowers, nursing and first aid, just as exhibitions, forums, discussions preparing for community activities, not forgetting education programmes where a mother learns about her important role as an educator.

Of course, all these programmes encounter numerous difficulties, and partial or total failures; listing them would be too long but would be of great interest as an introduction to the analysis of the social and human context inside which we are struggling. Anyhow this is why we reach only partly and very slowly, our objectives of the people's education, these objectives being the main part of our library work.

Programme of the Mini-Libraries

We briefly described hereabove the birth and evolution of a mini-library, located in an almost anonymous area of Greater Caracas. One mini-library. It would be hardly worth mentioning, were not this concrete and limited realization at the same time like the announcement of a wider project. In fact, we are ambitious. We intend to propose the organization of the mini-library as a model for the establishment of libraries and cultural centres in all our country.

What's the situation just now ? Here it is, briefly.

In Venezuela there exists an official type of library which has been steadily repeated, for many years, by the National System of Libraries (SINASBI), belonging to the National Library, an Autonomous Institute. The library pattern proposed by this State Institute

is really modern and attractive. It has taken into account the best from children's and adults' libraries in the most advanced countries : Scandinavia, North America, socialist or western Europe.

It is a huge effort, necessary but not sufficient. It calls for considerable material and human investment, inappropriate to the urgent needs and actual availabilities in our region. If we propose the mini-library, it is also to take into account these important needs and limitations, always more dramatic in unprivileged areas. As a matter of fact, as we have just said, the mini-library doesn't come from high above, neither from a governmental organization nor from anywhere else outside the local community. It must stem from the initiative of a group of persons dedicated to community service : students, young peoples' groups, "juntes" or associations of residents. They must themselves find the premises intended for the library. Thus the mini-library springs up from the basis, from the ground level, which offers the best guarantee for a consistent development, the sort of consistency which should exist between means and aims, in view of creating an authentic popular culture. Created on the spot and not imported, selfmanaged, not pitchforked, nor directed from far-away offices and national plans. In exchange, this birth and growth represent a difficult, slow and uncertain progress : spontaneous groups, mostly when they have no legal frames, are submitted to many hazards; they depend first of all on the perseverance of their members and their resistance to misfortunes. In a country like ours, bulging with young people and also full of insecurity, the stability and continuity of a mini-library is never sure.

Where do we stand now ?

Since 1976, the initial mini-library is officially integrated in the national network, although it has maintained the organization and autonomy of the mini-library, including the ideology and utopia hereabove described. But this library has multiplied. At present six mini-libraries have, by our efforts, been created in the suburb of a million inhabitants where we dwell. Apart from this limited network, about thirty other mini-libraries scattered all over the country were helped by us during the past years, when they started. However we don't know the exact number of those who survived difficulties and resisted the temptation of joining SINASBI; this organization sometimes tends to offer its services and

resources when a mini-library appears, at the price of autonomy and selfmanagement by the founding group.

It must be said, in fact, that in the present elementary state of development of the mini-library, the latter requires from the volunteers uncommon willingness to serve. A volunteer is an adult or a young person from the working class, often having no personal resources. If he is a student he is always short of money and suffers psychologically from dependance on his family; his family itself more or less surviving in the economic insecurity. And this type of person is asked to volunteer in favour of children and adolescents of the same class, all undergoing the same kind of difficulties.

So our "mini-librarians" are not, far from it, professionals in library, educational or social services. We believe it is advisable for them to have a level corresponding to approximately the first half of secondary school studies, but quite a number are of higher level. Besides we have organized for them a short basic course lasting 18 hours scheduled during a whole week-end of 48 hours. Using inductive methods and group dynamics, reflection is based on the three following points :

1) necessity, meaning, objectives and actors of the mini-library in an unprivileged area;

2) organization of the book collection : how to find the books ; learning to know the various kinds of books ; classification and cataloguing (1);

3) discipline of the mini-library, distribution of the tasks among the members of the team in charge, organization of book lending, relations between the mini-library and the community to be served.

This elementary "cursillo" we organised four or five times for approximately 80 learners, is of course quite insufficient, not only

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(1) We propose a simplification of the Dewey decimal system, keeping only one figure for each division in the classification, so that a group of mini-librarians have not to face insurmountable difficulties when going through the whole processing of a book, after the theme and subject have been determined. Besides, this simplification is an introduction to an understanding and future utilization of the decimal system used in all public libraries in Venezuela.

because the amount of subjects considered is too crowded and overlooks the capacities of participation of persons who are not yet much accustomed to using books; not only because the short length of time available hardly gives an opportunity for practical work which will take place at the mini-library itself; but also because the techniques learned during this first training session are mainly related to the library, the book and its handling, more than to what we believe is essential, I mean relationship between reader and book, and active promotion of the mini-library as a dynamic centre of popular culture, specially orientated towards those who would never approach books spontaneously. Bearing this in mind, we arranged two second level sessions for mini librarians more or less veterans. Only 12 persons gathered at each of these two meetings which were of the highest interest and led us to believe that permanent training together with experience/of relationship will be important and absolutely necessary.

We mentioned 80 learners who followed at least a first "cursillo" for mini-librarians. In fact we have here two opposing movements. On the one hand, each of the 80 mini-librarians delegated by their mini-libraries shared the fruit of this quick training with one or two other volunteers; thus it may be said that approximately 200 workers in mini-libraries may have benefited indirectly from the cursillo. On the other hand, we are aware that there is also a high percentage of mini-libraries that died out before the end of their first year. Many mini-libraries close down even before they are able to develop for various reasons : difficulties in finding suitable space, people dropping out, the lack of consistent help experienced by almost all mini-librarians, shortage of money, rarity of books, the inability to get efficiently organised and to observe a certain discipline in the accomplishment of tasks. Cross checkings and estimates allow us to say there are currently about 20 mini-libraries operating. Our being unable to tell their exact number and actual situation shows clearly that the help they deserve is not yet really organised nor continuous. Extension is still on a small scale, depending on individual help, and suffering from the lack of communication. Such a situation must not last long or else the model will disappear for ever.

Scheme for the organization of mini-libraries

Our wish is to create a sort of federation of mini-libraries in unprivileged areas, a horizontal network, and to prepare its possible integration as a "subsistema" under the National System SINASBI.
This type of organization would be profitable from many points of view : particularly it would enable the mini-libraries to be in touch with government organizations in order to receive material support, and a number of resources the lack of which may be decisive. This organization would also prevent the mini-library from selling its freedom, through weakness or lack of faith; and getting in exchange the "mess of pottage" consisting of material support and official technical help.

However, the installation of a sort of federation of mini-libraries, or the preparation of a national sub-system, would require a participation that we could not assume now; we lack the necessary material and human means. We should be in a position to have an effective responsibility for the existing and future mini-libraries : this help would consist in an efficient and recognized mediation with the government organizations, or by creating legal frames, starting a permanent training plan that would receive legal ratification, by visiting at regular and frequent intervals the mini-libraries, by helping them to find all necessary materials, by organizing meetings for the mini-librarians, etc.
So far, we are responsible only for the six mini-libraries already mentionned, and now and then we try to get in touch with one of the mini-libraries located outside the indicated area.

Owing to present difficulties in organizing a system or sub-system, we are temporarily limiting our action, according to the suggestion of the Président of the Autonomous Institute National Library, and propose that each mini-library adopt the legal form of an association, to avoid undesired integration, meaning disintegration, through the necessary connection with the Government Institute.

Tasks for the near future

Bearing in mind all the above factors, and our present possibilities, what would be in a near future the tasks to be realized in order to ensure a better foundation for an enlarged network of mini-libraries ?

We believe there are seven emergencies :

1) First, and it goes almost without saying, it would be necessary to initiate regular contacts with the mini-libraries or the mini-librarians we contributed to involve in the difficult adventure of community service. It/even seems convenient to establish periodical relations with them, so that they may profit from a support owed/to them.

2) Considering this, we should examine the possibility of publishing a short periodical newsletter for training and information, that would be a co-ordinating medium between all the generous book and library volunteers.

3) We also plan to typescript a sort of "mini-library guide" that could be used as a fundamental textbook for those in charge of mini-libraries. Such a textbook, based on several existing documents, could stand as a theoretical and practical basis for mini-library service.

4) It seems advisable to propose meetings allowing the mini-librarians to get better acquainted, to exchange views, to look together for solutions to community difficulties, and improvements in the organization and service, etc.

5) It would probably be necessary to organize not only first level "cursillos" but also a more elaborate course on librarianship (theory and practice) leading possibly to an official degree. Another solution would be to adapt the training of non academic library schools, specially those of the SINASBI and of the "Banco del Libro".

6) It would be advisable to establish semi-official relations with the State Institute National Library, head of the SINASBI. Such relations should not introduce insuperable difficulties, inasmuch as the present managers of the State Institute have clearly expressed their sympathy towards the principle of mini-libraries. Thus could be found the place of mini-libraries within the State Institute, respecting the independence and autonomy of the small group who, at the same time, would have to accept a certain discipline and the necessary working relations with the head institute.

7) Finally, all these conditions being fulfilled - and now we are no longer speaking of the immediate future - the project could be proposed on a large scale and we could encourage a great number of volunteers and mini-libraries throughout the country.

Conclusion : The mini-library, an utopia

One may reproach us, after these short considerations, to have emphasized beyond due measure the state of research, the difficulties, unanswered questions, instead of making enthusiastic triumphant statements, or simply giving the explanation of our method. But could we do otherwise, being so young and unexperienced on the path we are taking ?

However we wish to fly a bit higher in our conclusion. We wish once more to underline our faith in a struggle for a real culture of the people, culture to which books may lead; or, more precisely, a struggle in favour of a whole people, especially of its most unprivileged classes, who have not only the right to learn and read, but also to speak and express themselves in a society pretending not to hear.

Culture, in a Third World country like ours, is not, in the first place, being able to understand and appreciate the Illiade or the Divine Comedy, or to let oneself be entranced by Bach or Beethoven. Culture is to be able to find in oneself, and in one's own community the stimulus for a harmonious and social life; it is to be able to find or rather to re-invent in a new social context, the sources of conviviality, the meaning and means of education, a liking for celebrations. Culture is being the master of one's work and its fruit. A huge problem ! After eight years work, we can say that the library, and particularly what we have called the mini-library, may play an important part in this endless task. Having pointed out why books matter greatly, we wish to determine and limit their main function. Books may help to initiate a new awareness and creative activity, but they will never be an end in themselves, the principal concern of the librarian. What matters to us is the encounter between the book-medium and the reader; between book and society; in order that the library never forgets its duty to serve a certain type of society and foster a certain way of considering life. Reality with its injustices and hardships, is where our activity as librarians begins; but we are seeking quite a different utopia, marked by joyful creation, individual or social. The mini-library strives to be a tool for research in this direction, so that the power to read leads to the power to speak, to decide, and to transform life.

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SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND NETWORKING IN NORTH AMERICA:

PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF PARTICIPATION

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In 1978 Esther Dyer presented a paper before this group which addressed the question of including school libraries in national bibliographic systems.[1] In that paper she discussed the questions pertaining to the contributions, advantages, points of access, obstacles, and international implications of including school libraries in networks.

It is interesting to note that when the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science prepared Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action and the National Library of Canada prepared The Future of the National Library of Canada, the role of the school library in networking was not addressed. Due to this omission two documents addressing the question of the involvement of school libraries in networking were developed.

In 1977 the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) appointed a task force to examine the role of the school library within the total framework of national networking in the United States. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) of the American Library Association (ALA) assisted the commission in the development of guidelines for the structure of the task force and assisted in the selection of its members. The final report of the Task Force which addressed many of the questions raised by Esther Dyer in her paper was unanimously accepted by NCLIS in September 1978.[2] In 1979 the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) appointed an ad hoc committee to investigate the role for school libraries in library networking and resource sharing at the district, provincial, and national levels. A position paper based on the committee's work was published by the Association in 1981.[3] The

reports of the NCLIS Task Force and the CSLA Committee both state that there is a role for school libraries as full participating members of a national network.

Once having asserted that school libraries should be full participating members of networks each group noted certain principles which underlie the successful development of multi-type library networks. The NCLIS Task Force listed five guiding principles:

1. Each individual has a right to equal opportunity of access to information that meets his/her needs.

2. Networks must be built on strong individual library collections. Each participating library must have the capability of serving the ordinary needs of its users and of contributing to the network as well as receiving services.

3. Networking is not free. Besides specific equipment and materials costs, staff time will be needed to plan the network, to carry out its vital operations, and to provide the shared services.

4. All participating libraries must be equitably represented on the governing board of the network.

5. Effective communication among members is essential. A good modern communication system should link all member libraries, and individual librarians must feel at ease in contacting and working with their counterparts in other libraries.[4]

The CSLA developed a more specific list of principles for school library participation in networks:

1. School districts are best qualified to set down the role the schools should play. They must decide at what state and how they will enter a network. It must be clearly stated what services are to be found at the local, district and regional levels.

2. A network can justify itself only in terms of the service it can give to local members.

3. Structures should be set up for communication and cooperation between network members.

4. School libraries should be equally represented in decision making.

5. In setting up a national or provincial network, school-level personnel should be notified early.

6. Networks do not replace school libraries as suppliers of the needs of students but enhance school libraries and enable them to provide a high level of service.

7. It must be decided how many components will be in the network and priorities must be assigned to these components, e.g., bibliographic retrieval, cataloguing, inter-library loan.

8. Delivery systems for bibliographic data and information retrieval must be spelled out.

9. Remuneration to or from systems must be agreed upon.

10. Legislative issues and governance must be agreed upon.[5]

Even though the two lists are somewhat different, they encompass the same basic principles.

Of equal importance to the principles for school participation in networking are the factors identified by each group which inhibit cooperation. These factors are psychological factors (including attitudes), political and legal factors, funding factors, communication factors, and planning factors.[6,7]

Of these factors, the psychological factors are perhaps the most difficult to overcome. As Bender[8] indicates technology and resources are available and yet the greatest challenge still remains, people -- their attitudes, their fears, their emotions. The day these can be overcome will be the day a national

network can become a reality. Johnson and Hines[9] in preparing a position paper for the NCLIS Task Force found that there is widespread agreement in the literature that the major obstacle to participation in networks is the attitude of librarians as well as the attitude of some library users. The attitude of DeJohn[10] that, "Networking is built on mutual trust. You have to share what you have with others in a spirit of unselfish cooperation." Unfortunately this attitude is all too rare. Galvin[11] reports that in addressing public and academic libraries in a number of states he found they expressed the fear that the interlibrary lending apparatus would be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of requests from children. He goes on to state that he is uncertain whether it is the number of requests or the fact that it is children who are making the requests, for American librarianship has a long and inglorious tradition of making children second class citizens when it comes to library service. Pettem[12] in writing of his experience in North York, Ontario found that the public librarians' initial attitude toward cooperation was that it was of no advantage to them because there was not likely to be anything a school library would have that a public library would either need or want. Not all school librarians are enthusiastic about participating in networking or resource sharing. Chase[13] indicates there may be several reasons for this reluctance. He feels that school librarians tend to be isolated, and even libraries within a district may not cooperate with each other to any great extent. He feels that it is a result of their being self-contained to meet the needs of the school of which they are an integral part. Since many school library collections tend to be small, school librarians do not feel free to share materials. They fear that if something is

loaned it will not be available when needed by a teacher or student. The school librarian sees the needs of the student in the immediate as being more important than helping those in another school. Pettem[14] related two different attitudes of school librarians. He states that convincing a school librarian that he or she might lend something to the school down the street could be seen as a major triumph. He also indicates that one school librarian involved in resource sharing was considering leaving the network because she thought she was lending more to the public library than her school was receiving back. As the NCLIS Task Force[15] points out, it is not realistic to assune that mandates will overcome psychological barriers. Major efforts in in-service and preservice education of librarians, as well as a variety of public relations activities, can provide information, ideas, resources, and inspiration that could begin to develop positive attitudes toward interlibrary cooperation and networking. In this vain, The American Association of School Librarians[16] has recently released a set of three microfiche which is a collection of documents including text of state legislation, network planning documents, and booklets describing practical cooperation activities involving schools and other types of libraries.

The second factor, political and legal, which inhibits cooperation is often real and sometimes imagined as Pettem[17] states that legal barriers to sharing between tax-supported institutions really don't exist, except as an excuse for inaction. However, governmental structures can make multitype library cooperation more difficult. For example in many parts of the United States and Canada schools are governed by one department of government,

public libraries by another and public colleges and universities by a third. In Illinois after years of work we have been able to get the state department of education which governs public schools and the state library which governs public libraries to develop some cooperative projects. It is only a beginning but does indicate that changes can be made. A more difficult problem which is shared by colleges and universities is that school librarians do not occupy policy making positions. Policy is made by boards of education upon the recommendation of school administrators. As Bender[18] indicates school librarians must become informed about multitype library activities and other cooperative networks for they need to help school administrators and boards of education understand the benefits to be derived from participating in a cooperatively developed network.

With declining school enrollment and a reduction of funding for education, the third factor, funding, is becoming increasingly an even greater problem. Pettem[19] states the problem well when he indicates that now that schools are beginning to acknowledge a need for resource sharing, the funds to provide such ready access are no longer available. School boards faced with declining enrollment and struggling to maintain existing services would not even consider adding such a service. As we know networking may be cost effective but it is not free. If funds are not available from other sources for the support of networks, school libraries will have to absorb the cost from budgets that in many cases are already inadequate.

Effective interlibrary cooperation depends on the fourth factor, communication. The quality of the communication system that links libraries

and librarians determines to a great extent the amount of resource sharing. While many school libraries have OCLC terminals and sophisticated communication equipment, many do not have a telephone. Another component of communications is delivery of requested material. In Illinois we now have a statewide delivery system which uses small trucks. Each of the eighteen library systems comprising ILLINET have their own trucks which connect with neighboring systems. It is now possible to receive a requested item within two days after it has been located. It has increased costs somewhat but is more effective than using the U. S. mail service.

The final factor, planning, is as Galvin[20] indicates one of the most critical problems related to network development. He indicates of the three aspects of planning, design, evaluation, and accountability, evaluation is most often neglected. He states that it is necessary to specify the performance criteria the network is expected to meet. After these criteria are determined, a list of the resources required to achieve the level of performance must be drawn up. The network should then be organized so that its design will meet the specified criteria. Too often the only criteria used in evaluating the network is the cost/service ratio. The danger in this form of evaluation is that during the phase of early growth in a network costs rise more rapidly than service. A second problem that must be faced in planning is the issue of governance. The NCLIS Task Force[21] states that it is essential that all types of libraries be given equitable representation in the planning of a network and the practices which goven its operation. The question then is who represents school librarians. As was stated previously school librarians do not occupy policy

making positions and can not commit their schools to any type of agreement. Are schools then represented by administration or school board members? Finally it should be noted that pre-existing library networks that do not include schools can act as a barrier to the planning process. It is easier to involve all potential users from the beginning than to alter patterns of cooperation already in existence.[22] Since the purpose of governance is to set the direction of the network, establish goals and procedures, and insure equal representation of participating libraries, it is extremely important that school libraries be represented in the planning and governance of any network.

The report of the CSLA Ad Hoc Committee[23] identified seven examples of networks of which schools are members. These examples include both formal and informal cooperation among different types of libraries and different school systems at local, regional, and provincial levels. Services provided by these networks include bibliographic retrieval, reference service, and cataloging and processing.

The NCLIS Task Force[24] report includes a sampling of twenty seven existing networks which include schools. A recent survey conducted by the AASL Networking Committee found that of these twenty seven, nineteen are still in existence. Some have modified the services provided for various reasons, but reduced funding appears to be the major reason for these modifications. The sampling includes examples of statewide, regional (multi-state), and local full service networks. It also includes a sampling of specialized networks which provide acquisitions, central cataloging and processing, computerized data base, delivery systems, film evaluation, production of audio-

visual materials, selection, serials cooperative, and shared specialized resources.

Although these examples indicate that some progress is being made in involving school libraries in library networks, Galvin[25] reports that in only five of the fifty states are school libraries fully integrated into statewide networks. Early returns from a survey being conducted by the AASL Networking Committee indicate that in some states no statewide network of any kind exists. In other states schools have not yet been included in statewide networks.

A brief examination of three specific networks or resource sharing activities will perhaps give some insight into the development of interlibrary cooperation and resource sharing. One was brought into existence by informal agreements. The other two were brought about by the enactment of legislation.

In an article written in 1978, Gerald Brown[26] describes the activities of the Winnipeg School Division in resource sharing. The Winnipeg School Division has a data file that makes it possible to locate nearly all items processed in the system. A linkage between schools stimulates interschool borrowing. During a five month period, six hundred and sixty seven interschool loans were made based on this data file. The school division also obtains loans from other systems, provincial, and national libraries. Work has begun on mutual collection development policy with the Winnipeg Public Library. The schools have had a policy to purchase lightly in the area of fiction, but it does share blocks of fiction with branch libraries for summer use. The two institutions try to avoid duplication of film purchases and the collections of each are shared. Meetings between school and public librarians to discuss

complementary collections, reference service and the constituency, and reading programs have increased understanding and cooperation. Tours arranged to each other's institutions for specific information purposes have also improved working relationships. In addition to its cooperative activities with the public library, the Winnipeg School Division contracts with several surrounding school systems to produce catalog cards for both print and non print materials.

In 1967 the State of Indiana enacted the Library Services Authority Act. The major provision of the act provided that any two or more institutions responsible for libraries or providing library services could set up an authority. "Authority" as used here means a public agency or corporation with administrative powers limited to a specific field. Although the law is very specific in detailing in the areas of governance, funding, and the power and authority of the agency as well as how members may join and leave the agency, it does provide a great deal of flexibility in the operation of the agency. It was under the provisions of this act that the Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA) was formed in 1974 as a statewide bibliographic center. It developed a joint agreement which included membership opportunities to public, college and university, special, and public school libraries. The initial goals of the agency were to improve services to library users, to reduce rising costs of library operations, to make more effective use of Indiana's library personnel and to ensure effective integration of Indiana's libraries in a national library network. The agency developed a set of by-laws under which it was to be governed. Each agency which is a member of the authority appoints one representative to the board of directors. From the

board of directors an executive committee is elected to manage and conduct the business of the authority.[27]

In 1981 there were one hundred forty one member institutions with fifty five percent participating in OCLC. Of the total membership forty seven percent are public libraries, twelve percent are schools, twenty six percent are academic and fifteen percent are special. The authority is funded in part by the State of Indiana. It is interesting to note that the past two presidents of the authority have been school librarians. During the past year, in addition to the processing of materials, retrospective conversions, and conversion of the Indiana Union List of Serials online, the authority has initiated a number of pilot projects and provided continuing education opportunities for librarians.[28]

In 1981 INCOLSA and the Indiana Department of Public Instruction completed a jointly managed demonstration project of cooperative cataloging of nonprint media in a network environment. Staffs at large school library media centers were trained to catalog nonprint media to national standards including full MARC tagging.

One thousand two hundred and forty original cataloging records were added to the OCLC data base with a total of seven thousand four hundred and ninety five titles cataloged. The INCOLSA staff did data base searches and the actual catalog card production. Participants judged a decentralized, standardized approach to nonprint media cataloging satisfactory, and significantly increased their knowledge and skills in cataloging and MARC standards for nonprint media.[29]

In 1965 the State of Illinois enacted the Illinois Library Systems Act which

is administered by the State Librarian. During 1966 and 67 eighteen library systems consisting of public libraries and governed by public library trustees under the rules and regulations developed by the State Librarian were formed. The systems are totally funded by the State of Illinois through appropriations to the State Library. The intent of the act was to improve public library service. In 1972 the State Library Law was amended to give the State Library the responsibility of promoting and developing a cooperative library network. During that year the State Librarian urged interlibrary cooperation within the systems. Since the library systems act is permissive, the public library systems could not be required to include other types of libraries. However, in 1973 academic and special libraries were allowed to become affiliate members and participate in interlibrary loan and access ILLINET. In 1975 federal monies were used to fund system interlibrary cooperation consultant positions in the systems and schools were finally allowed to become affiliate members. It should be noted that affiliate members may sit on various advisory groups, but they do not have a voice in the governance of the system. In 1979 the Legislative-Library Development Committee of the Illinois Library Association began to study a revision of the Illinois Library System Act in order to fund and govern Cooperative Multitype Library Organizations/Systems (COMLOS). The membership of the Illinois Library Association endorsed the recommendation of the committee to work for a revision of the System Act despite opposition from some public librarians and system directors. During the next session of the state legislature, legislation to amend the act will be introduced. Because there is resistance to these amendments by some members of the library community, its passage is not

assured.[30]

Findings of an evaluation of the Interlibrary Cooperation (consultant) Program gives some insight into the resistance to amend the Systems Act. These findings are:

1. Of the 3,500 public and private school libraries able to meet the criteria for system membership, 17% currently are affiliates with systems.

2. Public and academic libraries were seen by respondents as almost equally essential to the success of multitype cooperation. Special libraries were ranked third, and school libraries ranked fourth in importance as partners in a multitype cooperative effort.

3. Tradition and history were considered to be the chief barriers to implementing multitype cooperation. Legal and administrative barriers were seen as the least significant obstacles.

4. School libraries are not viewed as on the "cutting edge" in library cooperation, and are also frequently viewed as threatening in terms of potential drain on system resources.

5. A more active and participatory role by the State Board of Education is seen as vital to the advancement of multitype cooperation in the state.[31]

This paper has attempted to provide an overview of some of the principles and problems of participation based on the North American experience. Most of the issues addressed are of concern to school librarians where ever they may be located. Of those factors which seem to inhibit participation in networks by schools, the psychological factor seems to be the most important to success and the most difficult to change. Even though the progress toward involvement of schools may be slow and the barriers to cooperation seem insurmountable, school librarians must view them as challenges to be overcome or school librarians will be left out of the decision-making process.

NOTES

[1]Esther Dyer, Including School Libraries in National Bibliographic Systems. (IFLA, 1978).

[2]Alice Fite and the Task Force on the Role of the School Library Media Program in the National Program, "Report of Task Force on Role of the School Library Program in Networking," School Media Quarterly 7, no. 2 (Winter 1979), pp. 89-90.

[3]Adrienne Elliott, Frank Karas, and Lorne MacRae, "Similar Futures: School Libraries and Networks," School Libraries in Canada 1, no. 3 (Spring 1981).

[4]Task Force on the Role of the School Library Media Program in the National Program, The Role of the School Library Media Program in Networking (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 55.

[5]Adrienne Elliott, p. 11.

[6]Task Force, p. 33.

[7]Adrienne Elliott, p. 11.

[8]David R. Bender, "Networking and School Library Media Programs," School Library Journal (Nov 1979): p. 32.

[9]Mary Frances K. Johnson and Theodore C. Hines, School Media Programs and Networking: A Position Paper (University of North Carolina, 1977).

[10]William DeJohn, "Networking and School Media Development," in Futurism and School Media Development edited by Marilyn L. Miller and Alida L. Gippert. (School of Librarianship, Western Michigan University, 1975) p. 50.

[11]Thomas J. Galvin, "Library Networks--Trends and Issues in Evaluation and Governance," Illinois Libraries (April 1980, Vol. 62, no. 4), p. 289.

[12]Doug Pettem, "Problems in School and Public Library Resource Sharing," Canadian Library Journal (Oct 1978), p. 362.

[13]Chase Dane, "Managing the School Media Library," in Current Concepts in Library Management edited by Martha Boaz. (Libraries Unlimited, 1979), p. 114.

[14]Pettem, p. 361.

[15]Task Force, p. 37.

[16]"School Library Media Programs in Library Networks," (Chicago: American Association of School Librarians, 1981).

[17]Pettem, p. 363.

[18]Bender, p. 32.

[19]Pettem, p. 362.

[20]Galvin, p. 290.

[21]Task Force, p. 56.

[22]Ibid, p. 58.

[23]Adrienne Elliott, p. 12.

[24]Task Force, pp. 73-85.

[25]Galvin, p. 291.

[26]Gerald Brown, "Schools a Link in the Community Resources Network," Canadian Library Journal (Oct 78), pp. 365-369.

[27]Barbara Evans Markuson, The Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority--A Plan for the Future. (Indianapolis: Indiana State Library, 1974).

[28]Annual Report. (Indianapolis: Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority, 1981).

[29]Janice E. Alexander. A Network Approach to Non-Print Media Cataloging for Schools: A Report of an Indiana Department of Public Instruction and Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA) Project Using the OCLC System. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1981).

[30]Toward Multitype Library Organizations/Systems in Illinois. (Chicago: Illinois Library Association, 1980).

[31]Brook E. Sheldon and Kay M. Stansbery. Illinois Interlibrary Cooperation (Consultant) Program: An Evaluation 1975-1980. (Denton, Texas: Texas Woman's University, 1981), p. 2.